

1-27-1972

Expedition Results-2

Siegfried H. Horn
Andrews University

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/hisban-excavations-1971-publications>



Part of the [History of Art, Architecture, and Archaeology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Horn, Siegfried H., "Expedition Results-2" (1972). *Publications*. 3.
<http://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/hisban-excavations-1971-publications/3>

This Popular Press is brought to you for free and open access by the 1971 Season at Digital Commons @ Andrews University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Publications by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Andrews University. For more information, please contact repository@andrews.edu.

Expedition Results - 2

By SIEGFRIED H. HORN

[The preceding four articles in this series have dealt with the history of Heshbon, the organization of the Heshbon expedition, archeological methods, and results of the 1971 expedition. This article describes further results, particularly discoveries made in an ancient Roman cemetery at Heshbon.]

Discoveries and Excavations of Roman Tombs. During the past two years many Roman and Byzantine tombs have been opened by local villagers and Bedouins and robbed of their contents. When I visited Heshbon in early April I saw a number of men emerging from freshly excavated tombs, southwest of the village of *Heshbân*. When they saw me they fled in the direction of the valley, making it impossible for me to recognize them in order to report them to the authorities for illegal excavation.

Realizing that important tombs, and in one case a unique tomb, had been discovered and robbed, I included in my application for an excavation permit a request to search for and excavate tombs, as well as to clean out some that had already been discovered and robbed, so as to salvage as much as possible.

A Rolling-Stone Tomb. One of the tombs already discovered and robbed by the villagers was a tomb whose entrance was closed by a rolling stone. This is the first tomb of this architectural style discovered east of the Jordan River. Christians are interested in this type of tomb since the body of Jesus was placed in a rock-hewn tomb whose entrance was closed with a rolling stone. Only five such tombs, all predating the year A.D. 70, have so far been found in western Palestine: two in Jerusalem; one in Abu Ghosh, the Biblical Kirjath-jearim; one in Nazareth; and one at Deir Dibwan, near Bethel. Both of the

Jerusalem rolling-stone tombs were constructed for royalty, one for the family of Queen Helena of Abilene, a convert to Judaism, and the other for the family of King Herod the Great. The first-mentioned tomb is in east Jerusalem, in the "Tombeau des Rois," at the corner of Saladin and Nablus roads; the other is in west Jerusalem, south of the King David Hotel, only a block from the Seventh-day Adventist church.

Because of its importance, we completely excavated the Heshbon rolling-stone tomb inside and out, and re-erected the huge rolling stone, which is four feet in diameter and one foot thick. We found that a double wall had been erected in front of the rock-cut tomb and that the stone rolled in a runway between the two walls. The entrance is so low that one can enter only by stooping down, just as John had to do in order to look into Joseph of Arimathea's tomb where Jesus had

been laid (John 20:5). Behind the entrance is a hall about nine feet square and high enough to allow an adult to stand up. Off of this hall are 12 burial niches, to which have been applied the Latin term *loculi* (singular *loculus*) and the Hebrew term *kôkîm* (singular *kôk*). These approximately six-foot-long tunnels are cut into the rock on three sides of the hall, four on a side. We found only heaps of disturbed bones, a great amount of dirt, a few objects, and broken vessels that had been overlooked by tomb robbers.

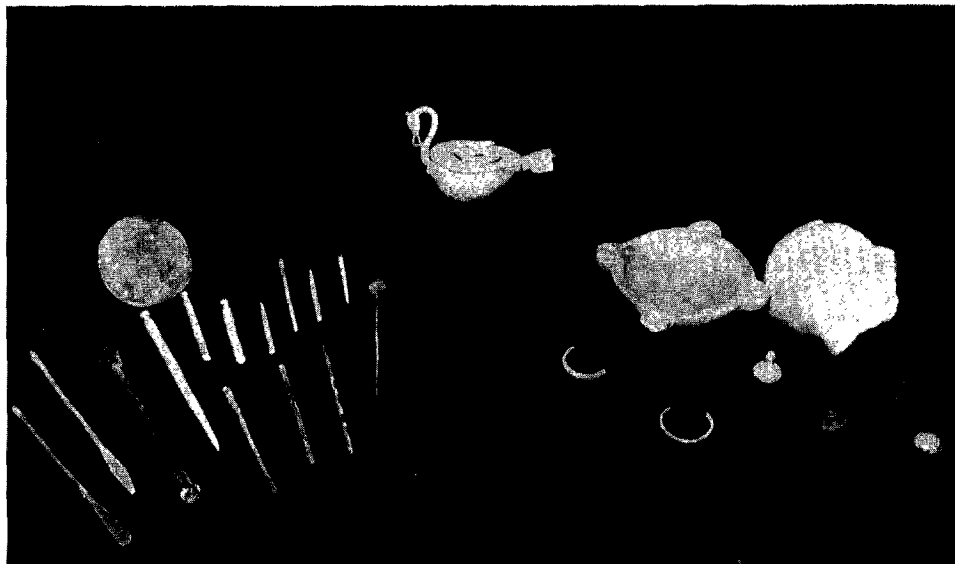
Arrangements for Tomb's Protection

By letter and in conversation with the director of the Department of Antiquities and the Minister of Tourism and Antiquities, I urged the authorities to erect a protective wall around this tomb and preserve it in its present state, so that Christian tourists to Jordan can see a tomb such as the one in which Jesus was buried.

One of Andrews University graduate students, Eugenia Nitowski, who participated in the clearing and excavation of this tomb, will make it a special subject of study and will write her Master's thesis on it.

A Swinging-Door Tomb. Another tomb discovered by the villagers prior to the beginning of the Heshbon expedition was a tomb of the second or third century A.D. whose stone door operates on hinges. The villagers had cleared out the tomb and then covered up the hole so

Below: Tombs from the Roman period turned up interesting cosmetic objects. Right: The meter stick gives an idea of the size of the entrance to a rolling-stone tomb, the first to be discovered east of the Jordan River. Lower right: Workers continue excavations in an area where a flagstone floor dating from the Roman period has been uncovered.



Siegfried H. Horn is professor of archeology and history of antiquity at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

that nothing of the tomb was visible. I had learned about this find through a villager and was happy when in the course of our search for undiscovered tombs our group of investigators rediscovered this tomb. Although this type of tomb is less rare than a rolling-stone tomb, it is still a tomb category, examples of which are seldom found. Only wealthy people could afford to be buried in a tomb such as this. The Sanhedrin tombs in northern Jerusalem and those of Jewish rabbis in Beth-shearim in western Palestine are the best-known examples of this type.

The swinging-door tomb at Heshbon is completely cut out of the rock and is entered through a low entrance. A rock stairway leads from the surface to the entrance. In front of the rock-hewn entrance is a stone frame in which the stone door turns. Inside is a hall with double crypts or coffins on three sides, all

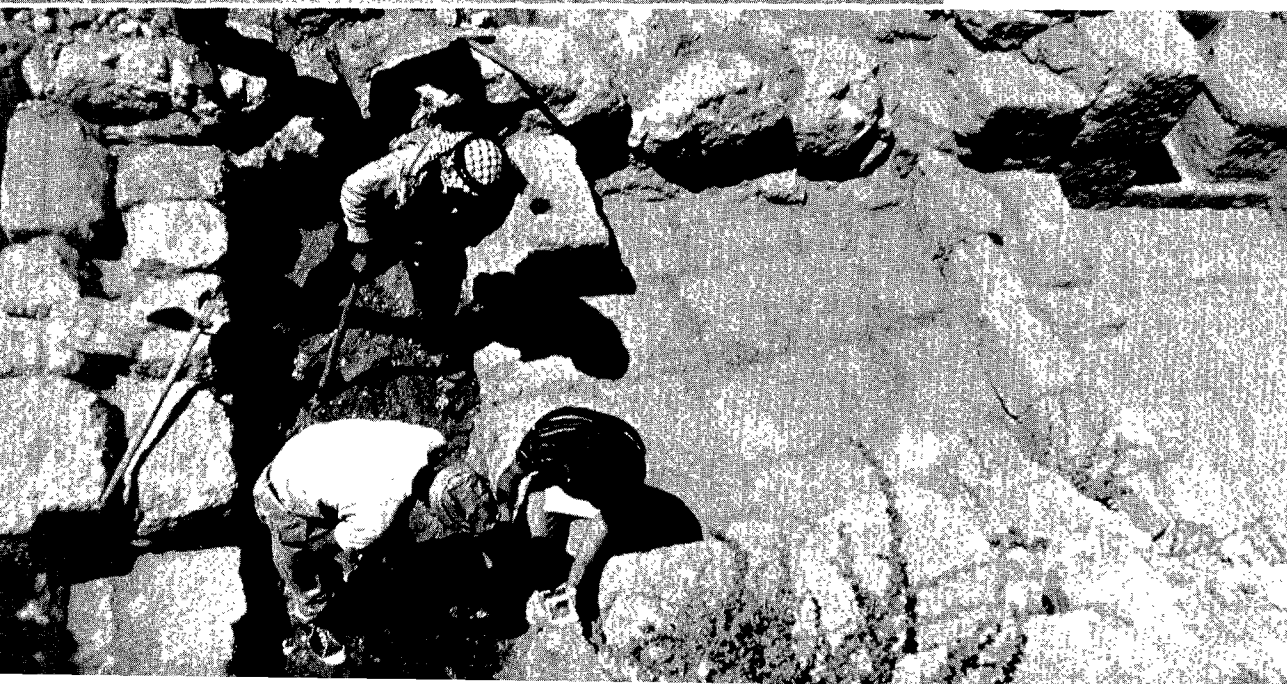
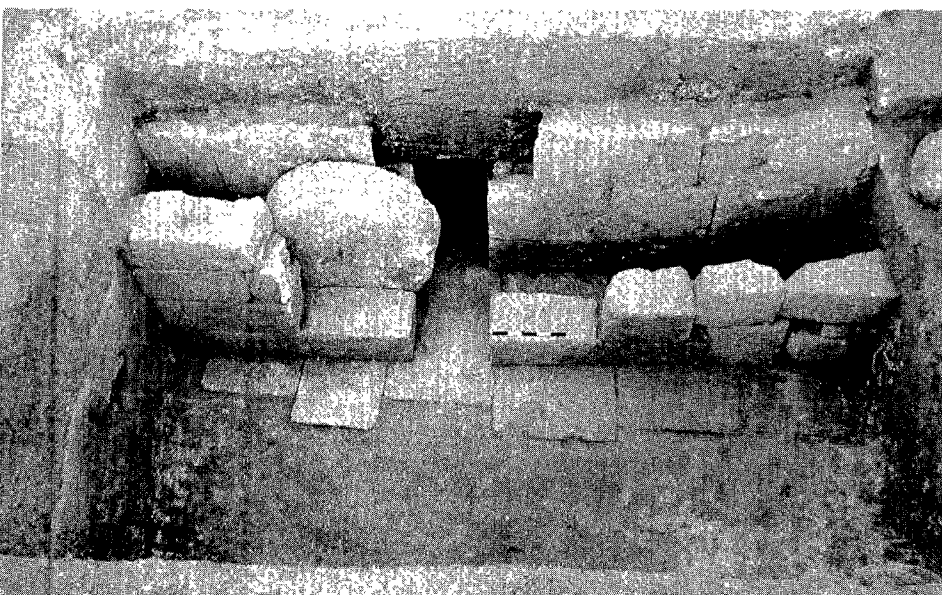
cut from the rock. Each coffin was covered by three flat, square plaques of baked clay that served as lids.

Although the robbers had emptied the tomb of its valuables, we decided to remove all the earth from the inside, because experience had taught us that the villagers, working quickly, are not thorough in their work. Furthermore, we wanted to clean the tomb so that our architects could take measurements in preparation for a publication of the find. We were greatly rewarded for our work because, probably anciently, some part of the ceiling had fallen down. This rock fall had covered a hoard of pottery vessels. The modern tomb robbers had not removed the rock fall and thus were unaware of the treasures that lay beneath it. We salvaged more than ten complete vessels and some broken but restorable vessels. When we made

this unexpected discovery, some villagers were overheard to say that they were learning from us to be much more thorough and persistent in any future tomb clearing they might do.

Another Early Roman Tomb. On Dr. Douglas Waterhouse's birthday (he is in the History Department at Andrews University), he and his team of excavators discovered an early Roman tomb that had escaped the search of the villagers. A large stone secured on all sides with smaller wedge stones, or brazes, still covered the low entrance. After these were removed we entered a tomb into which no ray of the sun had entered for many centuries. We saw that it was about half full of earth and consisted of a large square tomb chamber with a total of nine *loculi* arranged on three sides. In small niches on the walls we saw lamps that had probably last been lighted during the funeral ceremonies.

We first had great hopes of finding this tomb unspoiled and unentered since the day of the last funeral. However, we soon noticed that the bones lay about in great disarray and that some objects, especially pottery and glass vessels, were broken. It became evident that the tomb had been entered, probably in ancient times, that most of the jewelry had been stolen, but that the robbers had not been interested in pottery or glass vessels, bronze or iron objects. Later, probably in the Byzantine period, this and other opened and partially-robbed tombs were filled with dirt and resealed to protect their remaining contents from further spoilage. As a result, this first-century tomb provided us with more



than 100 registered objects, among which are fine ceramic and glass vessels, stone mortars, bracelets, and rings. Even a few gold earrings had escaped the attention of the earlier tomb robbers. One of the artistically fine objects was a little swan-shaped cosmetic container. The container was made from a shell with an ivory lid into which fitted the swan's neck and head, two wings, and a tail.

The rich contents of this tomb show that its owners had been wealthy. If this comparatively simple tomb contained such rich funerary objects, how much richer must have been the contents of the much more elaborate rolling-stone tomb or the swinging-door tomb? Our tomb certainly made us familiar with the household goods that

would have been used by a well-to-do family of Christ's time, vessels and objects that Jesus would have seen and used while visiting in the homes, for example, of Simon the Pharisee (Luke 7:36) or of Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector of Jericho (Luke 19:5).

Other Tombs. In our work we discovered tombs, besides those already mentioned, some of which had been completely cleared of their contents in ancient times, others still containing some objects and bones. In one late Roman or early Byzantine tomb, comparatively small in size, we found two beautiful, decorative bronze *fibulae*, heavy safety-pin-type brooches used to fasten clothing. That tomb also contained a Roman incense shovel of bronze, a work of art.

Such utensils used in pagan cults are known from Pompeii in Italy and from a find in the Wilderness of Judea made a few years ago, where several such shovels were found, together with a large collection of Roman utensils carried by Jews when they fled from the Roman armies to desert caves during the Bar Cocheba revolt in the second century A.D.

I have described enough of our discoveries on the mound and in the ancient cemetery to give a picture of the varied and exciting activities of the staff and workmen during the 1971 season of explorations at ancient Heshbon. We are looking forward with anticipation and with great expectation to the third season of excavations. ♦♦

(Concluded)

When You're YOUNG

By Miriam Wood

COMMUNES: YES OR NO? PART 2

In our last column we began a discussion of the new sociological development known as communes. Actually, communes aren't really new; man has been experimenting with close group living for a long time. In 1732, the Ephrata Community was established in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, with 40 men and 40 women who took vows of chastity and sharing. Their Spartan, rigid life of hard work and voluntary deprivation produced educators, caused books to be decorated exquisitely, and produced a distinctive singing style. The Cloisters still remain and may be visited, but the commune itself died out in the late 1700's.

Then there was New Harmony, Indiana—and many others. These were all characterized by strict moral codes and stern self-discipline.

An examination of modern communes soon brings one to a realization that they are based on the theory of the perfectibility of man. In other words, the assumption that if ideal conditions are provided, ideal people will be produced. This seems to be far too idealistic. Even in heaven—certainly the ultimate in ideal communities—some of the residents weren't willing to sublimate their selfish desires for the good of the whole. Only as he surrenders to Christ does one become unself-seeking. (Many disillusioned excommune dwellers now say that people in general aren't willing to give up their individuality.)

To assume that all people in a group are equally industrious, equally conscientious, equally motivated, is to deny

the lessons that history has taught us.

Another troubling factor is that while commune dwellers repudiate the straight world of goods and services, they are utterly dependent upon the latter for the luxury of their unhampered existence. On largely donated land, with many communalists living on unemployment checks, the setup seems an artificial one.

For a young Adventist, undoubtedly the most serious aspect of this type of life is its inevitable invitation to sexual promiscuity. People are not ethereal substances who float about on wispy, gossamer clouds of idealism; they are warm, vital flesh; they have strong, hard-to-repress drives. It follows naturally that when these inflammable creatures live together in a setting that provides optimum intimacy—well, familiarity breeds familiarity. The "love" we hear so much about nowadays—supposedly prescriptive for "what the world needs"—does *not* mean immoral sexual relationships between professing Christians. That's lust, and a violation of the seventh commandment. In view of this problem, communal living would need some careful study.

Throughout the Bible, high personal goals for achievement are prescribed. This is not meant as a mechanism to put others down but rather to encourage each individual to realize his full potential. ("They which run in a race run all, but *one* receiveth the prize.") Communal living philosophy runs counter to this.

In addition, I'm wondering what would happen to the imperative of the gospel commission if quantities of Ad-

ventist young people established themselves in communes. Very little carrying the message of Christ could take place. Essentially, that's the reason for our existence—the concept of being messengers for Christ.

Then if one truly believes that the only place utopia will ever be established is in heaven, he'd certainly be prodigal with his energies in trying to establish it on this savage planet. This is not to suggest that each person should not attempt to upgrade the quality of his life. But this is an inward more than an outward thing, I should think.

Having said all this, and having examined communal living fairly (we hope), one finds oneself, nonetheless, intensely sympathetic with the young people who long so desperately for warmth and *agape* love. What has happened to the family life which, in God's plan, should provide these elements so vital to the nourishment of the human spirit? A letter from a young girl sums it up in microcosm: "I can't remember our family ever sitting down to a meal together," she said. "Each person has a sandwich or a TV dinner by himself. Oh, how I long just *one* time for all of us to sit down around a pretty table and *talk* to each other while we eat good food that doesn't taste like cardboard!"

What can you do about it? Well, not join a commune, I hope, which is only a makeshift, artificial mechanism. You can, though, whatever your age and status, study your role in family living so as to generate every kilo of warmth and light of which you're capable.

It is better to light just one little candle than to join a commune.